HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

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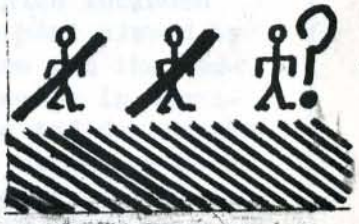
AREN'T YOU TIRED of reading the newspaper or hearing the news on the radio or television and being informed that another person you know, another man or woman from your neighborhood, another Brother or Sister has acquired the word "deceased" to his or her name? The quote displayed so prominently on this front page of the FLAME is taken from a recently released study by the Urban League on the state of "Black" family life in the United States.

So what. Caucasians kill each other too. Right? The Urban League study also indicates that, while the rate of deaths from accidents and violence for Caucasian males is 98.6 per 100,000, the rate for African males is 153 per 100,000. In other words, we are doing a significantly more effective job of killing each other than are Caucasians. This would not be particularly important if we were dealing here with but numbers in a computer bank somewhere. However, we are talking about us.

In talking about ourselves, we are talking of folks living at the "mercy" of American politics, American economics, and other U.S. systems and institutions. We are talking about African under-representation in the seats of U.S. power and over-representation among the ranks of victims of that power. In practically any area we can think of there is one level of benefit for Caucasians in this country and a substantially lower level of benefit for ourselves. The reasons(institutional racism, etc.) for this notwithstanding, the very fact of our holding, as we say, "the short end of the stick" makes the killing of our potential leaders, role models, etc. a substantially more crucial matter for us than it is for Caucasians.

The African community in northeast Omaha, like many other communities of African people in the U.S., would appear to have become a veritable killing ground. It seems as though, at least a couple of times a week, a Brother or Sister has been killed or seriously wounded by another Brother or Sister.

"Black males are the victims of violence to a greater extent than any other race or gender group, and in most cases the perpetrator is also a black male."



"Brother" or "Sister"? One wonders. For far too many of us these terms apparently mean nothing or next to nothing. According to current figures, approximately 42% of African families in the United States have but one parent, generally a woman. One reason for this, of course, is simply that African women in this country outnumber African men. And while our women are scratching their heads, trying to figure out how to find male companions, many of us("Brothers") are running about on the streets in an insane pursuit of some kind of ultimate OK Corral and doing Clint Eastwood in black-face.

There is no question but that, in a materialist society, to be unemployed or underemployed can put pressure on a person, can be a source of stress, of bad temperment. There are many other sources of stress and frustration. But your neighbor up or down the street didn't close the packing houses or create a school system which provided you with a miseducation, and an inferior one at that. It is not the Sister or

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H.A.C.O. Symposium

On September 17 the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will hold its annual symposium. The theme for this year's program will be "Which Way In '84." It will focus on the upcoming elections and the options available to African people here with respect to those elections.

Among those who will be participating as resource persons in the program are: Ernie Chambers, Pat Carpenter, and Matthew Stelly. Should African people support the Mondale-Ferraro ticket? Should we boycott the elections, at least as far as the presidential/vice-presidential candidacy is concerned? Is an independent or third-party candidacy an option we might consider? How do we assess the role Jesse Jackson has played in the campaign thus far? These are some of the questions which we will be addressing at this year's symposium.

Invitations for the symposium have already been sent out and we are limited to having thirty-five guests. Nevertheless, we urge you to contact us if you wish to attend.

Recent Programs

For the past couple of months the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization has been concentrating, in its educational programming, on the matters of individual and collective self-concept on the part of African people in the U.S. and self-esteem.

This series of programs was begun with a presentation by one of our members, Shakur, on the holding of European names by American-born Africans, the significance of our holding these names (which reflect the European identity of our former slave-masters but not our own African ancestry), and why we should consider changing them.

The subsequent program featured a presentation by Oyeken Owomoyela, originally from Nigeria and presently in the English Dept. at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, on tribal naming practices. This program, while dealing primarily with the issue of identity, included a fairly wide-ranging discussion of African history, traditional African religions, and the roles played by Christianity and Islam in the introduction and maintenance of the slave-trade.

Psychologists Michael Riley and Robert Morgan and Sociologist Matthew Stelly conducted a session for us on self-concept which provided a theoretical perspective to the issue of who we, as Africans born in America, are. This session was followed by one presented by Stelly in which the theoretical concepts previously discussed were further developed and broken down.

At our last meeting, a Brother new to Nebraska, A. Waliyy Hakeem, gave a lecture on self-concept which included historical issues, the part played by the public school system and the commercial media in developing in American-born Africans false and destructive self-images. Waliyy's extensive background in tele-communications came in handy as we discussed the portrayal of African people on television.

The issue of self-image/concept, as it relates to African people in the U.S. is a crucial issue and one which we will continue to pursue, with the help of you Sisters and Brothers who have knowledge and insights and are willing to share with us.

Thank You

We pay special tribute at this time to the following H.A.C.O. members: to Roy Allen, who has taken responsibility for distributing promotional materials here in the prison; to Robert Toney, who has been stapling the hell out of the FLAME; and to Warren Haynes, who has been handling inside distribution of the FLAME.

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. Editor: Wopashitwe Mondo Byen we Langa(David L. Rice)

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Brother next door who has passed laws which maintain a status quo which is inequitable.

The City Council can pass an ordinance which we don't like and maybe we talk bad about the Council in the newspaper or maybe we send some impotent delegation to the Council chambers to protest. A television program airs that we find offensive and we may write letters to the station or hold a press conference. One of us is murdered by the police and we complain or, if we're really upset, throw rocks and bottles at the police. Things go bad generally and we go to church and say "Oh Lord." Yet an African man or woman, like ourselves can speak an out-of-the-way word to us and many of us, particularly African men, seem quite well willing to kill or be killed, to pull the blade or the gun in order to let the whole world know that "we bad."

No intelligent person could stretch his or her imagination far enough to believe that many or most of these incidents of African-on-African violence could not have been avoided by the use of some real old stuff--common sense! But instead of common sense being the vehicle by which disagreements might be solved, too many of us are acting upon the impulses of an American cowboyism. It is silly, stupid, and tragic that we are cutting each other down with such apparent nonchalance.

But it is not only stress and frustrations and cowboyism. There is this, that America has told us we are niggers and taught us to hate niggers. Many of us have accepted that we are niggers and, if the homicides in our communities are any indication, have learned to hate niggers. Of course, there are those who would prefer not to believe that we could be so effectively programmed by the institutions of this country and would attempt to explain away our killing and assaulting of each other by "proximity." In other words, these people would say that the pressures put on us by American society cause us to feel angry and that we vent this anger on those whom happen to be closest to us geographically. According to this belief, the high rate of African-on-African violence is due only to the fact that, since we African folks tend to be concentrated together in the same communities, our very proximity to each other makes us prey to each others' anger, aggression, etc.

But if we listen to and watch our Brothers and Sisters using "nigger" and "black" as words of put-down in moments of anger, it becomes evident that there is more to our violence against each other than a matter of proximity. If we observe how we ape Caucasians, it becomes evident that more than proximity is involved. If we take note of how quick we are to use words, and occasionally rocks and bottles, to express disenchantment with Caucasians who are in authority or represent it, while we are as quick to use guns on each other, it becomes evident that the blood puddling our streets is about more than who happens to be handy when one of us gets "pissed off."

Whatever the causes, we ought to have grown tired of shedding each others' blood, of having to look into open caskets and seeing our loved ones there wearing the garish make-up of the dead. This self-genocide must cease and we must take whatever measures required to make it cease. We must, in general terms, do two things. We must take steps to drive the "nigger" out of our minds and instill a wholesome pride in ourselves as African people. And we must establish a climate in our communities such that is clear that we, not the white power-structure's police, will not tolerate violent or threatening behavior on the part of any of us.

It is time for us to begin to take these steps, not only because we ought to be tired, but because our lives are precious.

--the editor

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From Other Sources

Union Movement in Azania(So. Africa)

..."The issue is a new wage scale for Black miners. The mining companies are so far refusing to negotiate wages with the National Union of Mineworkers (N.U.M.), the Black miners' union. Instead they have unilaterally declared a pay increase and vowed that this is all they will give.

..."Black miners are employed on a yearly contract and are forced to live in compounds to which they cannot bring their families. They earn an average $260 a month compared to $1,395 for whites. These white 'miners' actually do no work, at most they supervise Black miners. On some shifts they don't turn up at all--leaving the Blacks to do everything.

"The mines, especially the gold mines, are South Africa's most important industry. They are its primary source of foreign exchange and have supplied much of the capital for South African industry. Any threat to the stability of the mines is a threat to the stability of South African capitalism.

..."A little over a year old, it(N.U.M.) has recruited 70,000 members(out of approximately 600,000 African miners) and has won the right to bargain for Black miners. They have asked the government to appoint a conciliation board as the first step towards a legal strike.

..."Today whites make up only 18% of the South African workforce. By the year 2000, only 7% of the workers will be white.

"Until the lat few years, the giant Black workforce was unorganized, after previous attempts at unionization in the '40s and '50s had been broken by vicious repression. Even today when the Black unions only represent about 7% of urban Black workers and 20% of industrial workers, they are a force to be reckoned with. If they are allowed to survive, their growth is virtually inevitable.

..."While it is true that unionized Black workers have made financial gains and are incomparably better off than people in the bantustans, there are few signs of any accommodation being reached. The tendency instead has been for the unions to begin raising political issues in the plants after they have won recognition and some initial wage increases.

..."At the moment, at least five union leaders are in prison without charge or trial. Under the Internal Security Act they can be detained indefinitely. Twenty-seven union members are currently on trial for attendin an illegal meeting (meeting outside the factory gates after a walkout). Others remain to be tried on the same charge.

..."Currently U.S. business is subsidizing apartheid to the tune of $2.5 billion in direct investment and $3.8 billion in bank loans..."

--Excerpted from pages 7 and 22 of the September/October issue of SOCIALIST JOURNAL: CHANGES

Announcement: ART

If you are interested in exhibiting your artwork in the State Office Bldg. during February(for Black History Month) or are interested in working with people in the hanging of an exhibit of works, contact: Paul G. Johnson
History & Soc. Sciences
NE. Dept. of Education
Box 94987
Lincoln, NE. 68509
(402) 471-4330

Also, on January 15, there will be an exhibit in commemoration of Martin L. King. Students in the Lincoln and Omaha Public School systems are eligible to submit work for this exhibit. Contact Paul Johnson for additional information on this.

poetry

Easy As Death Is

you fire the gun
the bullet pushes its way brutishly
through the summer air of evening
to meet the soft yellow sport shirt
you watch with pretentious cool
as the slug tears the fabric

from where you stand
the hole looks clean
as if punched in a factory by machine
an eyelet squirting blood
to enforce its dark red stain
upon the cloth
and this man pays the cost
of matching
your insecurity with his own
your insults word for word
to puff up his chest like yours
he goes limp
goes slack
the police report will state the facts
"cause of death--homicide
victim and assailant--black"

all because
your rep was on the line
your manhood was at stake
you had "to let this nigger know"
put on a show for the crowd
which has not come this far along
to be unnerved by the wail
of the meat-wagon's song

aint no question for you
of whether what youd did was wrong
you aint no weak mother...
to whom such a question might occur
a pussy mother...
who might be moved
no it aint about that
my man
just something you had to prove.

--Mondo

Love--Hate

my momma never told me
why
she had thirteen kids
brats
infidels & sinners
who told her love was physical
why she worked those jobs to feed us
clothe us & beat us
with branches
jerked
from trees
how come she never talked about drugs
lying & fornicating
because
my momma never mentioned
why she was too busy
too tired
too practical
to let me steal some of her love
naturally.
when i cried into the coffin
i could only ask
"do you love me?"

--wili(Wili Otey)

The Invisible Ballot

Vote! Vote! Vote!
That is the Amerikkkan way!
If you choose one to represent you,
You'll experience a better day.
Go.....To.....the Polls!
That's what it's all about!
Once you cast your ballot,
you can learn what life's about.
The Democrats will cheat you.
The Republicans will constantly beat you.
The "Independents" are dependents
and all three parties defeat you.
They call it the electoral college.
But it works against you and me;
'cause it negates black knowledge
with some in-au-then-ti-ci-ty.
Vote! Vote! Vote!
They say that it gives you a chance;
Legislate. Participate.....
.....Right into Concentration Camps.

--Matthew C. Stelly